

THE VIRGIN MOTHER OF JESUS



MARY, IN FAITH.

—JAMES C. BYRNE.

MARY, IN SCRIPTURE.

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"And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: and she cried out with a loud voice, and said: Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the Mother of My Lord should come to me? * * * And Mary said: My soul doth magnify the Lord: and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. Because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid: for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed."—Luke I: 41, 42, 43, 46, 47, 48.



THE CATHOLIC TRUTH SOCIETY
OF AMERICA.

Pamphlet No. 28.

ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA.



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MARY, IN FAITH.

NO more worthy object of honor among mere creatures can be conceived than Mary, the mother of our dear Redeemer, and no more appropriate time can be set aside for revering her transcendent excellence than the month of May. This long wished for month invariably comes cheery with azure skies, balmy with southern winds, fragrant with myriads of flowers. We inhale new life and live in sympathy with all nature renewed around us. Then, too, our higher nature undergoes a new birth—a new awakening. It as if the chains of old habits had been snapped asunder and the native goodness of the soul had burst forth to begin once more the struggle with sin. What happier time for the contemplation of innocence, virginity, charity as personified in the Blessed Mother? At this season of the year the presence of the Divinity is felt beneath the sprouting grass and the unfolding flower and the glad-some sunbeams, and arouses the religious sentiment in man as at no other time. Hence this month was always sacred. Ere yet Christianity had taken possession of the world the smoke of sacrifice on May-Day arose to the skies. It is to Christianity's credit that it has not suppressed but directed these out-bursts of the human heart and changed rites which ended in degradation into a worship most purifying and elevating. Such is the honor given in May to Mary. Let, then, all Christ-

ians praise, honor, venerate and rapturously love the Queen of May. The keenest perception of abstract loveliness when turned to her will not be disappointed, and the most enthusiastic appreciation of all that is ideally beautiful in womanhood in her will find repose.

This invitation will be heeded by those whose experience ever has been that the more they honored Mary all the more did they honor God by Christian lives and Christian deeds. But there are Christians who have never experienced this genuine devotion to Mary nor its happy results, nay who abhor it as something ethically wrong in itself and outrageous to God. And thus happens that most incredible anomaly that Christians have to explain to Christians why and how they honor Christ in His mother. I call this an anomaly because were there question of any great leader or of any great sage other than Christ, his followers without exception, as the facts of history teach, would readily comprehend that honor to his mother was honor to himself. How strange would it be in this case were honor to the mother dishonor to the son. But we do not honor Mary merely because she was Christ's mother, but we honor, venerate and love her as devoted children, because she is likewise our mother. To make clear her right to this title, is to make clear her right to the honor that it implies.

The last and consequently the most touching legacy of Christ to the world was the gift of His mother. To Mary and John,—His most ardent follower, standing at the foot of the cross, He said alternately, "Son, behold thy mother," "Mother, behold thy son," and the understanding of Christians has been from the first that John was, in this solemn bequest, but the representative of all Christ's followers. Christian Faith teaches, moreover, that the great title that Christ redeemed for us at the price of His blood was that of "sons of God." Hence, on His first appearance after His resurrection He announces this title like a victorious leader after the battle, pointing out the spoils He has taken from the enemy. "I ascend" He says, "to my Father and to your Father, to My God and to your God." The

sacred writings again and again call attention to this title and to its high significance. "Behold," says St. John, "what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called and should be the sons of God."* St. Paul is equally explicit. "For whosoever are lead by the Spirit of God," he says, "they are the sons of God. . . . You have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry: Abba (Father)."† "For whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son that He might be the first-born amongst many brethren."‡ Thus adopted by the Father as His children we become through the pouring out of His spirit "partakers of the divine nature"§ and brethren of Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. But if we are the brethren of Christ then His mother is also our mother. She is His mother because He exalted her to the dignity of maternity; she is our mother because He exalted us to the dignity of brotherhood with Him. She is His mother by nature through the work of the Holy Spirit, and she is our mother by aggregation to Him in one mystic body through the work of the same Holy Spirit. Now, as the effect of this adoption of the spirit is the making of us conformable to the image of Christ, it follows, that, allowance being made for the lowliness of our nature, when we are baptized in the spirit of Christ we see supernatural truths as He sees them. We love our Father in Heaven and His justice as Christ loves Him, and we have the instincts of children toward Mary as He has them. The Christian's love of Mary, consequently, is nothing more, although it is sure to be less, than the love of Jesus for Mary. In our greatest outbursts of rapturous love for Mary, Our Mother, we are but feebly taking up, moved by the same Spirit, that joyous exultation and profound complacency in her majestic worth which holds full sway in the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

But if anyone imagines that Jesus allows His heart to rest in Mary as the ultimate object of His compla-

*I Ep. St. John, 3, 1. †Rom. 8; 14, 15. Gal. 4; 5, 6. Eph. 1; 5.
‡Rom. 8; 29. §II Peter, 1; 4.

cency, he imagines a most absurd not to say blasphemous thing. Jesus beholds all the gifts of Mary as but so many reflections of the goodness of God. Accordingly His complacency in her is not that of adoration but of recognition of God's work in her exalted sanctity and of congratulation with her that she has been so perfectly responsive to and impressed by the workings of His spirit. And we, Christ's brethren, honor Mary in precisely the same manner referring all the greatness which our words fail to express to the glory of Him, who gave it and congratulating her on its possession. Our veneration of her is but another way of honoring God and is as little a defrauding God of the honor due him as was Mary's own tribute to her excellence and to its author, when she said: "My spirit hath rejoiced in God, my Saviour, because He that is mighty hath done great things to me."

But if this is but another way of honoring God it is none the less a way which Mary's position demands that we employ. No doubt it is a signal honor to her that the saints of all times should recognize her by the title of mother. But it was by the death of her Son that they obtained brotherhood with Him and a right to this title, and Mary had to consent to that death although like a sword of sorrow it pierced her heart. It was in the hour of this supreme sorrow that she became our mother and the words of Jesus on the cross but announced the event. As Abraham hoping against hope sacrificed in spirit his only son Isaac and thus became the father of the faithful, so likewise Mary offering her only Son in faith became the mother of those who have faith in Him. Since therefore she has the dignity of mother by a travail in spirit that words cannot describe, it is our filial duty to acknowledge that dignity with all outward marks of respect and love. To consider Mary apart as some inanimate being in the great drama of the redemption, to look upon her as if she had no part in it, not even that of giving a heart-rending consent to it, is an ignoring of Christ's mother utterly unworthy of anyone calling himself Christian, and besides it is an utter

disregard for the facts. If Mary had been unaware of the tragic death in store for her Son and if she had been gathered to the just before that death was accomplished instead of being a witness to it at the foot of His cross, we could then see some excuse for this want of gratitude to her. And even then it would only be an excuse. For, even in the supposition that she was unaware of the Redemption, the blessings which her Son brought us are so great that it is impossible that our gratitude will not overflow to her who brought Him. In a word, to appreciate the mother we must appreciate the Son and it is impossible to have a genuine love for the Son without having also a genuine love for the mother. Every tribute of praise to her is a hosannah to Him and every crown placed on her head is laid at His feet.

The sneers of prejudice, which ridicules the strong terms with which at times Christians have honored their heavenly mother, are scarcely deserving of notice. These strong terms indicate great love and they can be sneered at by those only whose hearts are cold. Love's effusions never bear the strict analysis of the intellect and he who gives utterance to them never dreams that the words are to be taken with the same precision as if he were talking science or theology. Whatever may be their meaning elsewhere, when applied to Mary, as is indicated by the whole spirit of this devotion, they simply indicate the highest love and appreciation for such high created excellence. If they are poured forth with all the effusiveness of children this only proves that the doctrine here taught is written not merely in books but on the hearts of the faithful.

But not all Christians at all times obey the movements of the Holy Spirit dwelling in them. St. Paul teaches that we can sadden and even extinguish this Holy Spirit. In this case by sin we have withdrawn ourselves from His Spirit and have become aliens to Christ. If now we recognize our state, what is more natural than that we should have recourse to Mary to intercede for us with her Son that He would once more send His

Spirit into our hearts? It was at Mary's word that the Holy Spirit formed the natural body of Christ. It cannot be adverse to this Holy Spirit to reform His mystic body at Mary's prayer. If at her request her Son performed prodigies while on earth, there is no reason to believe that He will do less for her now. If this intercessory power implies that there is a court in Heaven we must remember that Christ Himself claimed the name of King with all that it implies. If, finally, again and again in miseries we turn to her, it is because we have the sure confidence that a mother's solicitude never wearies.

In the following pages the exalted position which Mary holds in the plan of Redemption will be shown from the records of scripture itself; that she was the inspiration of art and song from the very beginning of the Christian era will be shown from the impression which she has left on both. As for most of us, if we cannot deftly use the chisel, or ply the brush, or pour forth sound in sweet accents, or mingle lofty words with sweet rythm to portray the lofty conception we have of Mary's excellence, we can give what is dearer to her still, namely, a child's confidence and love. Let the devotion, then, begun in the month of May, never grow cold but in new ways find renewed fervor.

O Mary, all months
 and all days are thine own,
 In thee lasts their joyousness
 when they are gone;
 And we give to thee May,
 not because it is best
 But because it comes first
 and is pledge of the rest.*

JAMES C. BYRNE.

*"The Queen of Seasons."—NEWMAN.

MARY, IN SCRIPTURE.

The Immaculate Conception foretold.

Genesis ii: 13—15.

The Lord God said to the woman (Eve), Why hast thou done this? And she answered, The serpent deceived me, and I did eat. And the Lord God said to the serpent (the devil) . . . I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and

By the Immaculate Conception is meant that Mary, by a special favor, through the merits of her Divine Son, was conceived without the stain of original sin; or, in other words, that the soul of Mary was created in a state of grace and justice. We, at our creation, are not in a state of grace; we have lost it, and with it the right to heaven, and all favor with God, through the sin of Adam; and we have therefore God's displeasure upon our souls. This we call original sin. We are sanctified at our baptism; Mary was holy at her creation. Christ redeemed her as He has redeemed us; but us He has cleansed from original sin, Mary He preserved from being stained by it.

This privilege of Mary is foretold in the text cited above. For it is foretold that there shall be enmities between the woman and Satan. These "enmities" relate to sin. St. John says, "he that committeth sin is of the devil. . . . In this the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil."* Now, the "enmities" here referred to, are something special, above the ordinary "enmities:" greater than could exist between any other of God's saints and Satan; nay, the "enmities" between the woman and Satan were to be the same as those between "her seed" and Satan. "Her seed" is clearly Christ our Lord, Who crushed the serpent's head by redeeming us. Who, then, is the woman?

"The woman" is, in the first instance, probably the Eve who was actually present when the words were spoken, and who had herself just been crushed by the serpent—when she committed the sin. But the prophecy of the future enmities—"I will put enmities between thee and the woman"—could only apply to her as she represented another "woman," between whom and Satan there were to be full and perfect "enmities." This "woman," the "second Eve" as the Fathers often call her, was *Mary*.

"Every one," says Bishop Bull, a Protestant, "now knows that the seed there spoken of is Christ; and consequently that the individual woman, whose immediate seed He was to be, is the Virgin Mary."

The Immaculate Conception is expressly taught by the early Fathers. St. James of Sarug, in Syria, who lived in the early part of the sixth century, says that "if there had been any spot or de-

*I St. John, iii: 8.

her seed; she shall crush thy head, but thou shalt lie in wait for her heel.

Mary's Virginity foretold.

Isaias vii: 14.

A Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and His name shall be called Emmanuel (*God with us*).

fect in her soul He would have looked Him out some other mother with no spot in her."* St. Ambrose (A. D. 397) calls Mary "a Virgin by grace entirely free from every stain of sin,"† and St. Augustine (A. D. 430) proving against Pelagians that original sin has passed to all men, expressly declared that he did not intend to speak of the Holy Virgin Mary, of whom when treating of sins no question is to be moved for the honor of the Lord.‡

A VIRGIN SHALL CONCEIVE. In the time of Achaz, King of Juda, the King of Syria and the King of Israel came together to fight against Jerusalem, and God sent the Prophet Isaias to comfort King Achaz. And Isaias at God's command chose a sign—the Incarnation; as surely as the Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son Who shall be both God and Man, so surely shall the land of Juda be freed from the two kings. Mary appears in this great prophecy as A VIRGIN, or more properly THE VIRGIN. Many writers§ think that by the article *the* is meant *that particular* virgin, the one well known, namely, the one spoken of in Genesis ii: 15. St. Ambrose tells us that when Mary was saluted by the Angel and was told that she was to be the Mother of God, she believed that that Mother was to be a Virgin, for she had read this passage of Isaias, but she had not read *how* it was to be, therefore she asked the Angel, "*How shall this be done?*"|| The Protestant Bishop Pearson writes: "That she was a Virgin, not only when she was with child but after she had brought forth, is evident out of the application of the prophecy, 'Behold a Virgin shall conceive and bring forth a Son.' . . . We believe the Mother of our Lord to have been not only before and after His Nativity, but *forever* the most Immaculate and Blessed Virgin."¶

The virginity of Mary is also foretold, figuratively, by the Prophet Ezechiel: "*The Lord said to me, this gate shall be shut; it shall not be opened, and no man shall pass through it; because the Lord God of Israel hath entered in by it, therefore it shall be shut.*"***

St. Ambrose says that Isaias spoke of Mary by those words, "Behold the Lord will ascend upon a light cloud and will enter into Egypt,"†† and he says that by the light cloud is meant Mary the Virgin, who carried our Lord into Egypt when Herod sought to kill Him.‡‡

The parents of the Blessed Virgin were Joachim and Anna, who probably lived at Nazareth. At a very early age Mary was taken

* *Carmen I. in B. V. M.*, v. 193. † In Psalm cxviii. Serm. xxii.

‡ *De Nat. et Gratia*, c. 36.

§ Amongst others, the Protestant Bishop Bloomfield, in St. Matt. i: 23, who quotes Dr. Owen and Bishop Middleton.

|| *Exposit. in Luc.* c. ii. n. 17. ¶ *On the Creed*, Art. iii.

*** Ezech. xlv: 2. †† Isaias, xix: 12. ‡‡ *Exhort. Virgin*, c. v.

The Annunciation.

St. Luke i: 26—38.

In the sixth month, the Angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee, called Nazareth, to a Virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the Virgin's name was Mary. And the Angel being come in, said to her: Hail full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. Who having heard, was troubled at his saying, and thought within herself what manner of salutation this should be. And the Angel said to her: Fear

by her parents to the Temple at Jerusalem, and presented there to God. It was not uncommon among the Jews for parents to present their children in this way, and there were special apartments in the buildings of the Temple for such children. Mary, then, remained there several years, spending her time in learning, reading the Holy Scriptures, working in the service of the House of God, and in prayer. At the age of fourteen, as many writers think—for in the East women marry very young—she was espoused to her near kinsman, Joseph. Both she and St. Joseph were “of the house and family of David.” The Church keeps the feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin on the 21st of November, and of the Espousals on the 23d of January.

IN THE SIXTH MONTH—from the time that the Angel appeared to Zachary, telling him that his wife was to have a son, St. John the Baptist.

HAIL FULL OF GRACE. The Protestant Testament has: “Hail thou that are *highly favored*,” the Revised Version (in margin), “Hail thou that art *endued with grace*.” But all the Latin Fathers have *gratia plena*—“full of grace.” In St. Luke xvi: 21, a word of similar form is translated, “*full of sores*.” Our Lord’s saying of Lazarus that he was “full of sores,” is explained by St. Chrysostom to mean that his whole body was one great sore. In the same way when the Angel said to Mary that she was “graced” or “full of grace,” he meant that her soul was “all grace.” Origen (A. D. 254) says on this text: “I do not remember to have read elsewhere in Scripture what he (the Angel) said, ‘*full of grace*,’ which in Greek is expressed by *kexaritomena*; nor is there any such word addressed to any man. *Hail full of grace* is a salutation addressed to Mary alone.”* St. Ambrose says: “This salutation was kept for Mary alone. Rightly is she alone said to be *full of grace*, for she alone obtained that grace, which no one else had merited, that she should be filled with the Author of grace.”†

BLESSED ART THOU AMONG WOMEN, that is, “blessed *above*, or *more than*, other women.” The same words were used to Jahel, who killed Sisara, but they are used in a more excellent way to Mary, as the reason of her being *blessed* is the greater. “Not only blessed among women,” says the Venerable Bede (A. D. 735), “but with an eminent blessing among all blessed women.”‡ “Truly blessed,” says St. Peter Chrysologus (A. D. 454), “for she

* *Exposit. in Luc. c. ii: n. 9.*

† *Hom. iii. in Luc.*

‡ *Orat. v.*

not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a Son; and thou shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David His father; and He shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever, and of His Kingdom there shall be no end. And Mary said to the Angel, How shall this be done, because I know not man? And the Angel answering said to her: The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall over-

bore Him Who carries the world, she brought forth Him Who created her, she nourished Him Who gives food to all living beings."* "Therefore do we say to her," exclaims St. Proclus at Ephesus (A. D. 431), "*Blessed art thou among women*, who alone hast brought relief to the sorrow of Eve; and alone has wiped away the tears of her who was groaning; and alone hast borne the price of the world's redemption."†

THOU HAST FOUND GRACE WITH GOD. The grace of favor which Mary had found with God was that she should "conceive and bring forth a Son," Who should be the "Son of God," and that Mary should be the Mother of God. But how was it that she found such grace or favor with God? It was through her great holiness, particularly through her humility and chastity, and her great love for God, for "charity is the bond of perfection." On account of her excellence in these virtues, Mary was chosen out of the whole human race to be the Mother of our Saviour. How great, then, must have been her holiness? "If," says Dr. Hickes, a Protestant, "we had no particular account of her graces, we might rationally conclude all this of her from the history of our Lord's Incarnation; for nothing less than superlative holiness could receive such a testimony of Divine honor from the Holy Trinity;" and he declares that Mary "ought to be honored and celebrated and praised for her great holiness and for being chosen to be the Mother of God."‡

HOW SHALL THIS BE DONE? Mary here lays before the Angel her vow of virginity. "She would certainly not have said these words," says St. Augustine (A. D. 430), "had she not already vowed herself to God. But as this was at that time unusual among the Jews, she was espoused to a just man who should be her guardian." The same Doctor says that the Virgin Mary "had resolved to keep virginity and her husband was its guardian; rather, not its guardian, for God Himself protected her, but the witness of her virginal modesty." Again: "A Virgin she conceived, a Virgin she brought forth, a Virgin she remained." He states that "the dignity of virgins began from Mary;" § and the Venerable Bede says: "She was the first of woman to offer her virginity to God." ||

* Serm. 143.

† Homily on the Visitation.

‡ On Due Praise and Honor of the Blessed Virgin.

§ De Sancta Virginitate, c. 4; Serm. 225 and 51, c. xi. et xvi. (alias De diversis, 53 and 63).

|| De Annunt. Virginis.

shadow thee. And therefore also the Holy (One) which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And behold thy cousin Elizabeth, she also hath conceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth month with her that is called barren: because no word shall be impossible with God. And Mary said: Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy word. And the Angel departed from her.

SHALL BE CALLED. This means according to the way of speaking of the Jews: The Holy One that shall be born of thee *shall be* the Son of God.

BEHOLD THE HANDMAID. Wonderful humility of our Lady, who, though now become Mother of God, yet called herself His handmaid or servant!

BE IT DONE TO ME ACCORDING TO THY WORD. Mary here gives her consent that the Redeemer should be born of her. Without doubt God could have taken flesh of Mary without asking her consent; but this is not His way. As the first Eve did with free will and consent induce Adam to sin, and thus was a willing instrument of our fall; so Mary, the second Eve, was, with free will and consent, to bring our Saviour into the world, and thus be the willing instrument of our salvation. Hence St. Augustine says: "By a woman (Eve) death came, and by a woman (Mary) came life."* This likeness between the part taken by Eve in our fall, and that taken by Mary in our salvation, and the free will and consent of each, is drawn out by several of the Fathers. Tertullian (A. D. 220): "Eve had believed the serpent: Mary believed Gabriel; the fault which the one committed by believing, the other by believing has blotted out." St. Irenæus (A. D. 202): "Though the one (Eve) had disobeyed God, yet the other (Mary) was drawn to obey God; that of the virgin Eve the virgin Mary might become the advocate (or comforter). And as by a virgin the human race had been bound to death, by a virgin it is saved, the balance being preserved, a virgin's disobedience by a virgin's obedience."†

Mary, as Origen tells us,‡ and as we may gather from her having spent so many years in the Temple, "had the science of the Law, and was holy, and knew by daily meditation all that the prophets had foretold." She knew, therefore, that the Redeemer was to be "despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows;" that He was to be "wounded for our iniquities and led like a lamb to the slaughter." She must therefore have known that His Mother would have a part in all these sorrows; so when she gave her consent she must have been aware that it was not a mere title or dignity that she was taking, but an office that called for the endurance of great suffering; she must have known even then, what holy Simeon told her a little later: "Thine own soul a sword shall pierce." With all this knowledge she gave full consent—through earnest desire to do, in all things, God's will, and through love of mankind. Who then, after Jesus, has such a claim upon

* Serm. 232.

† See these and other passages in Cardinal Newman's *Letter to Dr. Pusey*.

‡ Hom. iii. in Luc.

The Visitation.

St. Luke i: 39—56.

Mary rising up in those days, went into the hill country with haste into a city of Juda. And she entered into the house of Zachary, and saluted Elizabeth. And it came to pass, that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the infant leaped in her womb. And

our love and gratitude? She is truly "the Mother of all living," for whereas Eve in giving us a temporal life gave us eternal spiritual death, Mary by consenting to be the Mother of the Redeemer has given us eternal life.‡

Thus was the "Word made flesh," in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and Mary became the Mother of God. She is truly the Mother of God and not merely the Mother of Christ's humanity, because she is the Mother of the Person, and the Person Who became her Son receiving His human nature from her, is truly God. The Council of Ephesus, which was held in 431 and is admitted by all Christians, defined that "the Holy Virgin is Mother of God, for she bore according to the flesh, the Word of God (the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity) made flesh." "Run through in thy mind all created things," says St. Proclus at that council, "and see if there is anything equal to or perhaps greater than the Holy Virgin Mary Mother of God. . . Count up all new and wonderful things, and see how the Virgin surpasses them all; for she alone, in an unspeakable way, bore in her womb Him Whom every creature praises in fear and trembling."

It is a pious Catholic custom to recall, thrice daily, the great mystery of the Incarnation, by which the Son of God was conceived of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary. This is done by saying devoutly the *Angelus*—a prayer so called from the words by which it begins: "The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary." The "Hail Mary," so frequently used by Catholics, also brings to our minds the Incarnation; and when we say with the Angel and St. Elizabeth: "Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb," we are praising our Blessed Lord Himself, for Mary was "blessed among women," because she was the Mother of God, and "the fruit of her womb," Whom we bless in the Hail Mary, is Jesus her Son. Thus this beautiful prayer, of which the first part is made up entirely from the Gospel, is not only a prayer in honor of our Blessed Lady, but also a direct praise and worship of her Divine Son.

MARY WENT INTO THE HILL COUNTRY. It was a journey of one hundred miles and more. Mary went that she might take Jesus to John and convey the grace of the Saviour to His Forerunner; also that she might help her cousin St. Elizabeth at the birth of St. John. The superior goes to the inferior! Admire the humility and charity of Mary.

CITY OF JUDA, probably Hebron.

THE INFANT LEAPED IN HER WOMB. Mary is made by her Divine Son the channel of grace; her salutation is the instrument through which St. John is sanctified while yet in the womb, and his mother is

* St. Epiphanius, *Hæres*, 78, 18.

Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost, and she cried out with a loud voice and said: Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the Lord. And Mary

filled with the Holy Ghost. Grace passes from Jesus to Mary, from Mary to John, from John to Elizabeth. St. Ambrose says: "Elizabeth was the first to hear the voice, but John the first to feel the grace. The infant rejoiced and the mother was filled with the Holy Ghost; the mother was not filled before the child; but when the child was filled with the Holy Ghost, he filled the mother also." What the Angel had foretold to Zachary* is now fulfilled: the child "shall be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb."

BLESSED ART THOU. Elizabeth was inspired to know what had happened to Mary, and she greets her with the same words as the Angel had used, adding a special praise of Mary's Son: "Blessed is the fruit of thy womb."

WHENCE IS THIS TO ME? Words of humility and reverence. Elizabeth, though herself the mother of him who was to be "great before the Lord," yet is astonished at receiving a visit from one of still greater dignity; for as Christ was greater than St. John, so the Mother of Christ had a far higher dignity than the mother of St. John.

THE MOTHER OF MY LORD. He Whom Elizabeth called her Lord was foretold by Isaias as "God the Mighty, Father of the world to come, Prince of Peace;"† St. Paul, later on, calls Him "the Lord of Glory" Whom the Gentiles crucified, Who is "over all things, God blessed for ever," "the Great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ Who gave Himself for us."‡ He also is the "King of kings and Lord of lords;"§ "the beginning and the end, Who is and Who was, and Who is to come, the Almighty;" for "the Word (the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, 'Who was made flesh and dwelt amongst us') was God," and "all things were made by Him, and without Him was made nothing that was made."|| He is God the Creator, and Sovereign Lord of all. He, the true God, became Man for us, and died for us upon the Cross, and Mary is His Mother, the Mother of God. Elizabeth must have known this when she addressed Mary "as the Mother of my Lord," for she was acquainted with the prophecies, especially that of Isaias, which spoke of the Christ as God; and, moreover, from what the Holy Ghost had revealed to her, and from the leaping of her son with joy at his Saviour's presence, she must have known that "the Holy One" that should be born of Mary, was the Son of God.

* St. Luke, i: 15. † C. ix: 6. ‡ I Cor. ii: 8, Rom. ix: 5, Titus. ii: 13.

§ Rev. xix: 16, i-8.

|| St. John, i: 1-3.

said: My soul doth magnify the Lord: and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. Because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid: for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. Because He that is mighty hath done great things to me: and holy is His Name. And His mercy is from generation unto generations, to them that fear Him. He hath showed might in His arm: He hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart. He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He hath sent empty away. He hath received Israel His servant, being mindful of His mercy. As He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his seed for ever. And Mary abode with her about three months, and she returned to her own house.

The Revelation of St. Joseph.

St. Matthew i: 18—25.

When Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Whereupon Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing publicly to expose her, was minded to put her away privately. But while he thought on these things, behold the Angel of the Lord appeared

IN GOD MY SAVIOUR. Jesus is Mary's Saviour as He is ours; He died for her as for us, and she was saved through His Precious Blood as we are. But as Venerable Bede says on this text, Mary "had a special right above all other saints to rejoice in her Jesus, that is her Saviour;" for the graces and privileges she received from Him were greater than those given to other saints.

FOR BEHOLD FROM HENCEFORTH ALL GENERATIONS SHALL CALL ME BLESSED. Because God has looked down upon His servant, so poor and vile compared to the Majesty of God, and has raised her to the high honor and office of being Mother of God, therefore shall, not Elizabeth only, but all people from this time forth "call me Blessed." How well is this prophecy fulfilled in the Catholic Church, in which, day by day, Mary is blessed and praised and venerated! And though Catholics give supreme honor to God alone, yet Mary is exalted and honored above all other creatures—because of her relation to God, because she is His Mother; and thus all honor that is paid to her is, indirectly, paid to God. Dr. Ellicott, Protestant Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol, says on this text: "What a vision of the future these words must have implied on the part of the village maiden who uttered them! Not her

to him in his sleep, saying: Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a Son; and thou shalt call his name Jesus. For He shall save His people from their sins. And Joseph, rising up from sleep, did as the Angel of the Lord had commanded him, and took unto him his wife. And he knew her not till she had brought forth her first-born Son; and he called His name Jesus.

The Birth of our Lord.

St. Luke ii: 4—19.

Joseph went up from Galilee out of the city of Nazareth into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; because he was of the house and family of David to be enrolled with Mary his espoused wife who was with child. And it came to pass, that when they were there, her days were accomplished, that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born Son, and wrapped Him up in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds watching and keeping the night watches over their flock. And behold an Angel of the Lord stood by them, and the brightness of God shone round about them, and they feared with a great fear.

own kinswomen only, but all generations should join in that beatitude."

HE KNEW HER NOT TILL SHE BROUGHT FORTH HER FIRST-BORN. St. Jerome* (A. D. 420) remarks on this passage that we are not to conclude from it that Joseph lived with Mary as his wife after the Birth of our Lord. "Joseph," he says, "was himself a virgin through Mary," and in Scripture, where the word *till* or *until* is used, we are only told what happened up to that time, not further. So in the book of Isaias,† God says: "Even to (until) your old age I am the same," in Psalm cix: "The Lord said to My Lord, sit Thou at My right hand *until* I make Thine enemies Thy footstool." But surely God exists the same for ever, and Christ will be at the right hand of God for ever, even after His enemies have been subdued. Nor because our Lord is called *first-born* are we to conclude that there were other children. The first, even if the only, male child was called the *first-born*, and the ceremonies concerning the first-born had to be observed without waiting to see whether others should be born or not.

* *Contra Helvid.*

† cxlvi: 4.

And the Angel of the Lord said to them: Fear not; for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people: for this day is born to you a Saviour, Who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign unto you: you shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger. And suddenly there was with the Angel a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God and saying: Glory to God in the highest: and on earth peace to men of good will. And it came to pass, after the angels departed from them into Heaven, the shepherds said one to another: Let us go over to Bethlehem, and let us see this word that is come to pass, which the Lord hath showed to us. And they came with haste, and they found Mary and Joseph, and the Infant lying in the manger. And seeing they understood the word that had been spoken concerning this Child. And all that heard wondered; and at those things that were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these words pondering them in her heart.

The Purification.

St. Luke ii: 22—35.

After the days of her purification, according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they carried Him to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord. As it is written in the law of the Lord: *Every male opening the womb shall be called holy* to the Lord. And to offer a sacrifice according as it is written in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons. And behold there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Ghost was in him. And he had received an answer from the Holy

HER PURIFICATION. There was no need for Mary to go through the ceremony of purification, for she had, in a most pure manner, given birth to the Holy of Holies. But she was purified as an act of humility and obedience and to avoid singularity. Our Lord Himself, though the only-begotten Son of God, was presented in the Temple, and later on was baptized by St. John the Baptist, with the baptism of penitent sinners.

Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Christ of the Lord. And he came by the spirit into the Temple. And when His parents brought in the Child Jesus to do for Him according to the custom of the Law, he also took Him into his arms and blessed God, and said: Now dost Thou dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, according to Thy Word in peace. Because mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples. A light to the enlightening of the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel. And his father and Mother were wondering at those things which were spoken concerning Him. And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His Mother: Behold this Child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted; and thine own soul a sword shall pierce, that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed.

The Adoration of the Wise Men.

St. Matt. ii: 1—11.

When Jesus therefore was born in Bethlehem of Juda, in the days of King Herod, there came Wise Men from the East to Jerusalem, saying: Where is He that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East, and are come to adore Him. And King Herod hearing this was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And assembling together all the Chief Priests and the Scribes of the people, he inquired of them where Christ should be born. But they said to him: In Bethlehem of Juda, for so it is written by the prophet (Micheas): *And thou Bethlehem the land of Juda art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come forth the captain that shall rule My people Israel.* Then Herod privately calling the

THINE OWN SOUL A SWORD SHALL PIERCE. Simeon here fortells the bitter sorrow that Mary was to suffer through her Son. This prophecy was fulfilled more particularly on Mount Calvary, when Mary stood by the Cross and saw Him Whom she loved so tenderly as her God and her Son, dying in such pain and disgrace. "Great as the sea was her sorrow." For this reason the Church calls her Queen of Martyrs.

Wise Men, learned diligently of them the time of the star which appeared to them; and sending them into Bethlehem, said: Go and inquire diligently after the Child, and when you have found Him, bring me word again, that I also may come and adore Him. Who having heard the King went their way; and behold the star which they had seen in the East, went before them, and it came and stood over where the Child was. And seeing the star they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And entering into the house they found the Child with Mary His Mother, and falling down they adored Him; and opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts; gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having received an answer in sleep that they should not return to Herod, they went back another way into their own country.

The Flight into Egypt.

St. Matt. i: 13—15, and 19—23.

After the Wise Men were departed, behold an Angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph, saying: Arise and take the Child and His Mother and fly into Egypt: and be there until I shall tell thee. For it will come to pass that Herod will seek the Child to destroy Him. Who arose and took the Child and His Mother by night and retired into Egypt: and he was there until the death of Herod; that it might be fulfilled which the Lord spoke by the prophet (Osee): Saying: *Out of Egypt have I called My Son.*

THEY FOUND THE CHILD WITH MARY HIS MOTHER, AND FALLING DOWN THEY ADORED HIM. A beautiful figure of Catholic devotion to our Blessed Lady. We, like the shepherds, find Jesus with Mary His Mother. The worship of Jesus leads to reverence for Mary; the love of Jesus leads to love of Mary. Yet, however much, for His sake and for her own, we may love her, reverence her, exalt her—we *adore* Him. To Him we give the *supreme* worship which is due to God alone; to Him we offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, which is offered to God alone; Him we ask for grace and salvation. The devotion to Mary, however great it may be, is just that kind which cannot be given to God; it is a *relative* devotion—given to Mary on account of her relation to God; it is devotion of *intercession*, by which we ask Mary to *pray for us* to her Son, for we know that while of herself she cannot do anything towards our salvation, yet by prayer she can obtain all from Him Who is Lord of all and still her Son.

But when Herod was dead, behold an Angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph in Egypt, saying: Arise, and take the Child and His Mother, and go into the land of Israel. For they are dead that sought the life of the Child. Who arose, and took the Child and His Mother and came into the land of Israel. But hearing that Archelaus reigned in Judea in the room of Herod his father, he was afraid to go thither; and being warned in sleep retired into the quarters of Galilee. And coming he dwelt in a city called Nazareth.

The Finding of our Lord in the Temple.

St. Luke ii: 41—51.

And His parents went every year to Jerusalem, at the solemn day of the Pasch. And when He was twelve years old, they going up into Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast, and having fulfilled the days, when they returned, the Child Jesus remained in Jerusalem; and His parents knew it not. And thinking that He was in the company, they came a day's journey, and sought Him among their kinsfolks and acquaintance. And not finding Him, they returned into Jerusalem, seeking Him. And it came to pass, that after three days they found Him in the Temple sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them and asking them questions. And all that heard Him were astonished at His wisdom and His answers. And seeing Him, they wondered. And His Mother said to Him, Son, why hast Thou done so to us? behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing. And He said to them, How is it that you sought Me? did you not know that I must be about My Father's business. And they understood not the word that He spoke unto them. And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth; and was subject to them.

SON, WHY HAST THOU DONE SO TO US? Here Mary made a tender complaint to her Son. His answer contained some mystery which even His parents did not fully understand.

HE WAS SUBJECT TO THEM. Jesus, as the true Son of Mary and foster-Son of Joseph, gave to them on all occasions the obedience, reverence, and love due from a child to his parents. He Who came

Mary's Power with her Son.

St. John ii: 1—11.

There was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the Mother of Jesus was there. And Jesus also was invited, and His disciples, to the marriage. And the wine failing, the Mother of Jesus saith to Him, They have no wine. And Jesus saith to her: Woman, what is it to Me and to thee? My hour is not yet come. His Mother saith to the waiters: Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye. Now there were set there six water-pots of stone, according to the manner of purifying of the Jews, containing two or three measures a piece,

to be our Pattern in all, gave a most perfect example of filial piety and observance of the commandment: *Honor thy father and thy mother*. St. Bernard (A. D. 1153) says: "He was subject to them. Who? To whom? God, to men; God, to Whom the Angels are subject, Whom the principalities and powers obey, was subject to Mary." *

From this time till the commencement of our Lord's Public Life, we hear nothing more of the Holy Family. Eighteen years were passed in retirement; we call them the Hidden Life of our Lord. It was probably during this period that St. Joseph died, and Jesus and Mary were then left alone, Jesus working at His trade as a carpenter, and Mary looking to the household duties of their little home and waiting upon her Divine Son. What a blessed home and what happiness for Mary! What heavenly lessons she must have learnt from Him, what graces she must have received! And if a cup of cold water given in His Name to the least of His is not to go without reward, what must Mary have merited by so many years of unstinted service given so generously and lovingly to the Lord Himself?

THEY HAVE NO WINE. Mary, seeing that the supply of wine had failed, and wishing to spare her hosts the shame of having apparently neglected to provide for their guests, tells her Son of their need, implying a request that He would supply the want. She asked something *very difficult*—a miracle before the appointed time. And when He answered her, she knew that her request, hard as it was and almost doing violence to her Son, was granted, for she went to the waiters at once and told them to be sure and do whatever He should say; and then our Lord did what she had asked by changing the water into wine. And *this beginning of miracles did Jesus at Cana*, at His Mother's prayer. And if her prayer was heard *then* while she was still in the world, and in a matter of so great difficulty, still more will her payers have power now that she has entered into the joy of her Lord.

WOMAN, WHAT IS IT TO ME AND TO THEE? Dr. Ellicott, Protestant Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol, says on these words: "It may be hoped that the day is now passed when anything other than thoughts of reverence and love is to be connected with the

* Hom. i. super *Missus est*.

Jesus saith to them: Fill the water-pots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And Jesus saith to them: Draw out now, and carry to the chief steward of the feast: and they carried it. And when the chief steward had tasted the water made wine, and knew not whence it was, but the waiters knew who had drawn the water; the chief steward calleth the bridegroom, and saith to him: Every man at first setteth forth good wine, and when men have well drank, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now. This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee; and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.

Mary is Praised.

St. Luke xi: 27, 28.

And it came to pass, as He (Jesus) spoke these things, a certain woman from the crowd, lifting up her voice, said to him: Blessed is the womb that bore Thee,

title of *Woman*, least of all in the words of One Who claimed as His own highest dignity of Sonship of, identity with, Humanity; and Who was here addressing the Mother to whom He had been subject and from whom His own Humanity had been derived." Doctor Trench, late Protestant Archbishop of Dublin says: "It is quite true that in the address *Woman* there is nothing of severity or harshness, however much it may have some such sound to our English ear. In those last and tenderest words which our Lord addressed to His Mother, He used the same language, 'Woman, behold thy son.' So far from any harshness, the compellation has something solemn in it, and cannot but have such where the dignity of woman is truly felt. But it is otherwise with the words, 'What have I to do with thee? (What is to Me and thee?) . . . Any severity which these words may seem to have in the reading, we cannot doubt was mitigated in the manner of its speaking; suffering as it did a near compliance with her request to look through an apparent refusal. For when 'she saith unto the servants: Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it,' it is evident she read a Yes, and as the sequel shows rightly read it, in His apparent No." * St. Cyril says of this miracle: "Especially by this does Christ show that the honor which is owed to parents is worthy of account, undertaking as He did to do what He had no mind to do, out of reverence for His Mother." † St. Augustine: "Did He then come to a marriage to dishonor a Mother, when marriages are celebrated, and wives taken in order to have children, whom God bids to honor their parents? Beyond a doubt, brethren, there is some *hidden meaning* here." ‡

BLESSED IS THE WOMB THAT BORE THEE. The first public fulfil-

* *On the Miracles*, Sermon. i.

† *In loc.*

‡ *In Joan. tr.* viii.

and the breasts that gave Thee suck. But He said: Yea rather, blessed are they who hear the Word of God, and keep it.

“His Mother and His Brethren.”

St. Matt. xii: 46—50.

As He was yet speaking to the multitudes, behold His Mother* and His brethren stood without, seeking to speak to Him. And one said unto Him: Behold Thy Mother and Thy brethren stand without, seeking Thee. But He answering him that told Him, said: Who is My Mother, and who are My brethren? And stretching forth His Hand towards His disciples, He said: Behold My Mother and My brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of My Father that is in Heaven, He is My brother, and sister, and mother.

ment of Mary's prophecy: *All generations shall call me blessed.* Somewhat similar to this is the praise of Mary uttered by St. Cyril in the Council of Ephesus. “Hail, Mary, the most precious thing of the whole world; hail, Mary, incorrupt dove; hail, Mary, inextinguishable lamp; for from thee was born the Sun of Justice.” *

YEA RATHER. St. Augustine says: “Mary was more blessed in receiving the faith of Christ than in receiving the flesh of Christ. For to some one who said to Him, ‘Blessed is the womb that bore Thee;’ He (Christ) answered, ‘Rather blessed are they who hear the Word of God and keep it.’” † Our Lord “assents to the testimony of the woman”—these are the words of the Venerable Bede‡—but declares that Mary is even more blessed on account of her holiness, than on account of her relationship to Him.

HIS BRETHREN. These were James (afterwards Bishop of Jerusalem), Judas (not the traitor), Joseph, and Simon. They were not “own brothers” to our Lord, for the Blessed Virgin had no children besides Him Who was the Son of God, but either His half-brothers, being sons of St. Joseph by a former marriage, or His cousins and sons of another Mary, sister, or sister-in-law to our Blessed Lady, and wife of Cleophas§ (also called Alpheus). This is the opinion of St. Jerome, and is followed by most Catholic, and many Protestant, writers. We often find in the Scriptures near relations called “brothers.” Abram speaking to Lot, his nephew, said “We are brethren,” and Laban called Jacob, his nephew, “My brother.”|| Our Blessed Lord when dying, left His Mother to St. John, passing over “His brethren,” which He could not have done had these been her own sons; and this, as the learned Dr. Lightfoot, Protestant Bishop of Durham, observes,¶ is fatal to the view that Mary had other children than Jesus.

* *Orat. contr. Nestor.* † *De Virgin.* c. 4. ‡ *Hom.* 19.
§ *A' Lapide in h. l.* || *Gen.* xiii. 8, xix. 15. ¶ *On Galat.* i. 19. *Dissertation* ii.

Mary at the Foot of the Cross.

St. John xix: 25—27.

There stood by the Cross of Jesus, His Mother, and His Mother's sister, Mary of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalen. When Jesus therefore had seen His Mother and the disciple, standing, whom He loved, He saith to His Mother, Woman, behold thy son. After that, He saith to the disciple, Behold thy Mother. And from that hour the disciple took her to his own.

Mary Praying with the Apostles at Pentacost.

Acts i: 14.

The Apostles were persevering with one mind in prayer with the women and with Mary the Mother of Jesus and with His brethren.

THERE STOOD BY THE CROSS OF JESUS, HIS MOTHER. The sword of sorrow, foretold by Simeon, was now piercing Mary's heart, as with heroic bravery she stood at the foot of the Cross and witnessed the death agony of her beloved Son (see note p. 17.)

WOMAN, BEHOLD THY SON. There is something very solemn in these words, almost the last of the dying Saviour. Mary is now established as "the Mother of all living," as she is styled by many of the Fathers. St. Augustine says: "She was clearly the Mother of His members, which we are, for she took part in causing that the faithful should be born in the Church, and they are members of that head (Christ);"* and Origen declares that "no one can arrive at the true meaning of the Gospels, without reclining on the breast of Jesus (that is, being like St. John) and receiving from Jesus Mary to be his Mother also."† Truly as we call Jesus our Elder Brother, for He is "the First-born among many brethren," in the same way may we call Mary our Mother.

THE DISCIPLE TOOK HER TO HIS OWN. From that time Mary dwelt with St. John, and was to him as a Mother, and he took care of her like a son. We do not read in the Gospels that our Lord ever appeared to His Mother after His Resurrection; but, as St. John tells us,‡ "there are also many other things which Jesus did, that are not written," and we cannot think that He Who commanded us to "honor our father and our mother," would Himself leave His widowed Mother, who for His sake had been so sorely afflicted, without consolation. He showed Himself to Mary Magdalen twice, and also to other women, and it is only natural to believe that on His Resurrection He went at once to His Mother, that she who had borne a chief part in the sorrows of His Passion, should be gladdened by the sight of His glory. And, how great must have been Mary's joy that Easter morning, when "according to the multitude of sorrows in her heart, His consolations brought joy to her soul!"§

* *De Virgin.* n. 6.

‡ St. John xxi. 25.

† *In Joan.* i.

§ Psalm xciii.

Mary's Glory.

A great sign appeared in Heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; and being with child she cried travailling in birth and was in pain to be delivered. And there was seen another sign in Heaven; and behold a great red dragon having seven heads, and ten horns: and on his head seven diadems, and his tail drew the third part of the stars in Heaven, and cast them to the earth; and the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to be delivered, that he might devour her son. And she brought forth a man-child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron, and her son was taken up to God and to His throne.

The death of Mary took place twelve or, some think, eighteen years after our Lord's Ascension, probably at Jerusalem. It is the common belief of Catholics, though not expressly defined by the Church as an article of faith that soon after death Mary's body was raised to life and *assumed*—that is, *taken up*—into Heaven. This opinion is very ancient, and the feast of the *Assumption* has been kept in the Church since at least as early as the sixth century.

The bodies of all men shall be raised to life on the last day, but there are good reasons why Mary's body should be raised without waiting for the General Resurrection: for it does not seem fitting that that body from which the human nature of the Son of God had been formed, should see corruption; it is also reasonable to suppose that our Lord would honor His Mother in some special way after death.

A WOMAN CLOTHED WITH THE SUN. Here at the end of the Bible, as at the beginning, we have a woman, a man, and the serpent or dragon. The serpent is the devil; the "man-child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron," and Who has His throne in Heaven, is our Blessed Lord; then the woman "clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet and on her head a crown of twelve stars," who "brought forth a man-child," must be Mary His Mother.*

W. H. COLOGAN.

* Cardinal Newman says of this vision: "Of course it has a further sense also," besides the one given above, "which is the scope of the image; doubtless the Child represents the children of the Church, and doubtless the Woman represents the Church; this, I grant, is the real or direct sense, but what is the sense of the symbol? Who are the Woman and the Child?" And: "The holy Apostle (St. John) would not have spoken of the Church under this particular image, *unless* there had existed a Blessed Virgin Mary, who was exalted on high, and the object of veneration to all the faithful" (*Letter to Dr. Pusey*, p. 62.)

MARY, IN ART.

WHAT the Incarnation is to Christianity, that is Mary to Christian Art; the germ, not only of its marvelous tenderness and super-human beauty, but of that sublimity of conception which brings heaven to earth; gives us the companionship of saints, of angels and archangels; brings us even to the Beatific Vision, where our humanity united to the divinity, makes us, in the very words of the canon of the mass, "partakers of His Divinity who vouchsafed to become partaker of our humanity, Jesus Christ our Lord." This lifting up of the body, mortal, perishing, under its earthly conditions, to its immortal and glorified destiny, immortal like the soul—has made it possible for Christian art to take a flight inconceivable to the noblest genius of pagan Greece. It has been said, that a palliation of their idolatrous worship is found in the expectation, universal among men, of an incarnation of the divine nature in the human, and that under the influence of this tradition, their heroes and gods, actually rose above the human ideal.

The significance of this thought once realized, its consequences are instantly apparent; while the infinite superiority of the motives underlying Christian art over any which could influence pagan art, must be traced to her, who said: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to thy word." It is not, therefore, without reason that we said: "What the Incarnation is to Christianity, that is Mary to Christian Art."

As a proof that Christian artists have worked, from the beginning, instinctively under the influence of the fact of Mary's part in the Incarnation, we go back to the first age, before the year one hundred, to find, on the walls of the most ancient chamber in the catacomb of Saint Priscilla, a veritable Madonna, painted, according to the authority of Chevalier de Rossi, the

greatest of our Roman archæologists, before the martyrdom of Ss. Peter and Paul, under whose benediction Saint Priscilla had been taken from her home on the Way of the Patricians to her catacomb chamber on the Salarian Way. In this picture, we see the Blessed Virgin with her Divine Son on her lap, nourishing Him at her breast, from which He turns as if to listen to the prophet Isaiah standing before them and pointing above to a star, typifying the star which Balaam had predicted should rise out of Jacob, and now reposing in His Virgin Mother's arms. Not only does this Madonna embody and show forth the theology concerning the Incarnation from the Annunciation to the present time, but it has the grace and infantine simplicity so characteristic of Raphael's Madonnas. Yet this Madonna, remarkable as it is, we must remember is only one of many in this subterranean cemetery, which is said to contain more Madonnas than all the other catacombs of Rome together; for all the catacombs give testimony to the love of the early Christians for Mary under her divine maternity. Especially do we find this charming subject treated not only frequently but with great beauty in the catacomb of Saint Domitilla of the second century. In both these cemeteries the Mother and Child are sometimes alone, but very often, as if repetition were no fault, they are represented as receiving the Visit of the Magi, a subject rich in ideas growing out of the Incarnation. Rev. Thomas J. Shahan, D. D., of the Catholic University at Washington, in his admirable little book entitled, "The Blessed Virgin in the Catacombs," tells us that "more than sixty representations of this last subject have been found in the cemeteries belonging to the first four centuries."

One of the Madonnas in the cemetery of Saint Priscilla makes a part of what Dr. Shahan calls a Liturgical fresco, representing the giving of the consecrated veil to Saint Pudentiana, the grand-daughter of Saint Priscilla, and who has her burial place in the tomb belonging to her family. The *Orante*, or praying figure, occupies the center of the picture. To the right hand

a venerable man in full vestments is seated in a chair; before him stands a maiden holding a white veil in both hands, and behind her a young man, acting as assistant at the ceremony, while the venerable priest seems to point towards the group at the left hand, representing the Blessed Virgin, seated, and holding her Babe to her breast; the gesture of the priest seeming to indicate Mary as a model to the maiden before him.

On the ceiling of a chamber in this same catacomb of Saint Priscilla, is the earliest representation of the Annunciation as yet discovered. The virgin of Nazareth is seated in a chair, her eyes cast modestly down, as if listening to the angel standing before her, who is clothed in a girded tunic, the index finger raised while delivering to her the message sent by God Himself—that in her should be accomplished the promise of a Messiah. Everything about this picture confirms the opinion of Chevalier de Rossi, that it cannot date long after the year one hundred. It is in an ancient part of the cemetery, and the style is beautifully classic, not only in the figures, but in the decorative garlands of the ceiling and the doves that flutter at the corners as symbols of the Holy Spirit.

The Nativity, which has been declared to have had no place in art before the fifth century, is found today on an arco-solium in the catacomb of Saint Sebastian, with the special marks of a Nativity, viz.: the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger, and the presence of the two traditional animals, the ox and the ass. This picture is assigned to about the year 350, and has been lithographed for the *Annals of the Archæological Society of Rome*; while the sarcophagi of the catacombs laid hold of the Nativity as well as of the Visit of the Magi. Some of these sarcophagi groups of the last subject are remarkable for their elegance, while others are charming by the grace of the Infant, who, in one instance, puts out His arms to embrace the donor of the gifts, as if he were more precious than even his precious offering. There was, indeed, no end to the fervor with which these early Christian artists set before the faithful what, we must believe, they asked for.

The actual Maternity of Mary seems to have seized, first of all, upon their imaginations, although she is often seen with other saints as their patroness, especially with Saint Agnes in the bottoms of those glass cups found in the catacombs, the figures being in gold between the glass; in fact, there has been no use of the prerogatives of the Blessed Virgin in later times or in middle age or modern art, which has not a precedent in the first four—we may say in the third, second or even first age of the Christian Church.

From this catacomb period, we emerge, with the Church herself, into the light of day; and with the coming forth of our Lord from the subterranean shadows, comes forth His Blessed Mother.

In 431, Celestine I., called the Council at Ephesus, known as the Third Council, which convened June 22, of that year. At this council it was declared, as a dogma of faith, that Mary is the Mother of God; in as much as Jesus Christ being of two natures, God and man, and still but one person, and Mary having given Him her humanity to be united to His divinity, she is, in the same manner and as truly the Mother of the God-man, as our mothers, who have formed not our souls but our bodies only, are still the mothers of our souls and of our bodies.

The enthusiasm with which this decree was received, not only by Ephesus "the city of the Virgin Mother," but by entire Christendom, was deemed worthy by Pope Celestine of special commemoration. Not content with having ordered a fresco representing this council to be painted in that most ancient sanctuary of Mary, the catacomb of Saint Priscilla, where he had prepared a tomb for himself, he planned a trophy which, to this day, attests the dignity of Mary as declared by the council of Ephesus. This was no less than an Arch of Triumph, to be erected in that beautiful basilica on the Esquiline Hill, called, by pre-eminence, Santa Maria Maggiore or Saint Mary the Greater. This was not accomplished during Celestine's life-time, as he died in 432, but his intentions were carried out fully by his successor, Sixtus III. This arch repre-

sents, in exquisitely tinted mosaics on a gold ground, the principal events establishing the Divine Maternity of Mary. To the extreme left hand and upper corner as we face the arch, is given the Annunciation. The Virgin of Nazareth is seated on a throne. In the air above we see an angel flying towards her and pointing to the Dove of the Holy Spirit descending upon her, while the angel appears in the second scene of the same act, as standing before her and delivering his message with the same majestic gesture as on the ceiling of the chamber in Saint Priscilla's cemetery but winged; as are his five companions who stand near the Virgin's throne.

Directly on a line with this, occupying the right corner of the arch, we have the Presentation of our Lord in the Temple; the Blessed Virgin with her Babe; Saint Joseph; the aged Simeon and devout Anna; the attending angels and those "waiting for the redemption of Israel," who came at the call of the prophetess.

Below this, we have the Finding in the temple, and still below, a little out of chronological order, we should say, the first scene in the Visit of the Magi, viz: Their appearance before Herod, who is consulting the chief priests and scribes as to where the Messiah would be born, beside him the guard in full armor and the priests and scribes with their open rolls.

On the left, directly below the Annunciation, is given, after a magnificent conception, the Visit of the Magi. Our Lord, as an infant, sits on a jeweled throne with a dais, above Him the star. On the right side of this throne is a lower one, on which is seated His Virgin Mother, richly attired. At the left side, on a simple chair, is seated Saint Joseph in a brown habit and he seems to present the Magi, who advance with their gifts, clothed in rich costumes. Below this picture is represented the Murder of the Holy Innocents, the minions of Herod wresting the infants from their mothers' arms. The beautiful accessories to these mosaic pictures we must not attempt to describe, enhancing however much the value of the arch as a work

of beauty; because we are now considering it as a monument to the place which Mary had in art with the pontiffs of the fifth age of Christianity.*

The honor given to Mary in the glorious apse of Santa Maria Maggiore and of Santa Maria in Trastevere still do not fill out the measure of Mary's worth in the eyes of the Roman pontiffs or the Roman people. It is demanded from age to age with a never failing fidelity, and when mosaic gives place to fresco, Mary is still there in all her majesty and beauty and significance. Cimabue left in his parish church of Santa Maria Novella, Florence, the grand Madonna on which rests his fame above all others, and to which Ruskin has paid such a noble tribute in his *Mornings in Florence*. "There is not such an elaborate piece of ornamentation in the first page of any Gothic king's missal, as you will find in that Madonna's throne; the Madonna herself is meant to be grave and noble only; and to be attended by angels." While in contrast to this enthroned Madonna, with her beautiful Child on her lap, held as a queen-mother would hold it, is another by Cimabue to which Ruskin pays a tribute even more touching. This is in the lower church at Assisi, and few read it aright. The Madonna is holding her Son on her arm who seems to have caught sight of some person behind His mother, pointing to it with a strange gladness, as if saying: "See, My mother, see!" and she has turned and seen—what? Saint Francis pierced as this Son will be on the cross! Her look of anguish is not to be put into words, while her thumb is still turned towards the dreadful vision and her eyes are fascinated by the eyes of the Babe who explains the vision to her. It is of this picture that Ruskin says: "Among all the Mater Dolorosas of Christianity, Cimabue's at Assisi is the noblest; nor did any painter after him add one link to the chain of thought with which he summed up the creation of the earth and preached its redemption;" *i. e.*, the Incarnation and Redemption are both set forth in this Mater Dolorosa by

* We could not attempt to describe this arch from memory, but do so from a fac-simile put out by Spithover of Rome under the direct supervision of Chevalier de Rossi.

Cimabue. The picture which gives the most wondrous art and noblest inspiration of Giotto, moreover, is a Coronation of this same Mary, Virgin and Mother, in the chapel of the Baroncelli family, in Santa Croce, Florence; crowned by the Son she brought forth in a stable and saw crucified and entombed.

But it was not Florence alone whose Madonnas gave Mary a place in art which may well inspire our devotion as well as our pens. Siena, in that public palace which we overlook from the height crowned by her cathedral, has an enthroned Madonna by Simone Memmi, surrounded by thirty-nine saints all adoring and praising Jesus, the blessed fruit of her womb, and honoring the Mother whom all generations will call "Blessed;" while Duccio and Ansano of Siena, have given Madonnas that are unrivalled in their tenderness and pathetic grace.

From these masters, trained in schools of piety, which made not only painters of saints but saints of painters, we come to the year 1400, which saw Fra Angelico painting in the Dominican convent of Fiesole, overlooking Florence, and whose Annunciation in the convent of Saint Mark, and that most blissful of all his Coronations with its charming groups of angels weaving in and out to heavenly measures, illumined by the almost dazzling scintillations of the Beatific Vision, give us the beginning and consummation of Mary's assent to the Incarnation. And yet that year 1400, saw the birth of that Luca della Robbia, whose conceptions, wrought out in terra-cotta, have a mystical beauty which rivals that of the Angelical Brother himself. Convent and monastery, the doors of sacristy closets, the tabernacles of altars, missal and antiphonal, fonts for baptistries, panels for bronze gates, all belonging to this chaste age of holy aspirations after the beautiful as an emanation from the Divinity, prove to the eye as no asseverations could prove to the ear, where the artists of those days found their inspirations; and when we attempt to study the details of a shrine like that of the Madonna in *Or San Michele*, Florence, telling how a city of merchants sanctified their money getting; or

that "Gate of the Mandorla," of the cathedral of Florence, in the apex of which Jacopo della Quercia sculptured the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in relief, with a graciousness of beauty which seemed to inspire those who worked on the columns and pilasters supporting it, as well as the lintel—enriched as these are by sculptures so expressive of joy in bird and animal life, with the stories of trumpeters and buglers and their musical instruments, in a lavishness of invention which puts to shame our modern economy of time and skill—we seem to catch a glimpse of the powerful motives supplied by the Incarnation and by Mary as its exponent.

And all this before what people are pleased to call the Madonna period! All this before Leonardo da Vinci or Luini or Perugino painted their entrancing Madonnas, and before the youthful Raphael, following in the heavenly path of his father, Giovanni Sanzio, or the instructions of his master Perugino, conceived those lovely types of Virginal Maternity which charmed the Florentines and won him a call from that keen discerners of spirits, Julius II, to the chambers of the Vatican! What becomes of the charges made against Catholics as Madonna-worshippers in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when we find these charges equally deserved in the fifth and even the first century? The historical facts concerning "Mary, in Art" cannot be dwelt upon too much in detail, because this monumental testimony, as it may be called, is worth all that a title deed is worth to the possessor of lands and homestead. We are now proving our birth-right, and—God grant! it may not only become an intellectual verity but a possession of the heart. With the public of today, there is a growing disposition to ask for new types of Madonnas, new types of the Divine Child, new types of the boy, Jesus. People ask for a national type, and the one preferred is the Hebrew for Mother and Child. We have nothing to say about this. Nearly every great artist has had what we call a type; *i. e.*, a certain cast or mould of features which, to him, expressed his ideas of the Madonna. Sometimes

we see this type, especially in Perugino's pictures, adhered to almost through life, and we may say nearly the same of Leonardo da Vinci, of Luini. But these artists were not thinking of nationalities; they were trying to express in outward forms the characteristics of the Mother, virgin as well as mother, and they varied, not so much their general type as their individual expression. Sometimes, also, we see a marked improvement in the perfection of this type, as if with the intention of eliminating from it every trace of individuality or personality. This is the highest praise which can be given to any artist; that his Madonnas are not Hebrew or Italian or Spanish or German, but impersonal embodiments of supernatural grace. No artist in the world succeeded in doing this so completely as Raphael. He began with Perugino's type, and this was succeeded by one after another, less and less individual. We can even see within a few months, a wonderful dropping away of personality until a universal type seems to have been developed, in which womanly beauty and loveliness is united to exquisite sentiment and Virginal Maternity; until as Raphael approached his zenith, to which he attained so early, we see, what we have called the universal type in his Madonnas. The one to which we would first call attention as proof of this, is Raphael's "Il Spasimo," or, the meeting of the Mother and Son on the way to Calvary. No one, looking at this picture, whether the original, copy, engraving or photograph, ever thinks of Mary as to her nationality. She is above and beyond all nationalities; and, for all nationalities the Mother of Sorrows, and the spasm which wrings her heart wrings ours. The kneeling figure, the long, outstretched arms, the imploring hands, the face in its agony of maternal sympathy, are taken into the soul to remain there impressed forever.

But above all is this true of that hitherto unrivaled Madonna, called the Sistine. This glorious, altogether majestic Madonna, has not the last trace of a type clinging to its contours. The broad intellectual brow, thoroughly feminine, the hair drawn from it, the

wonderful eyes scanning creation as she floats out of heaven, having legions of angels for her background; the feet not even skimming the round world beneath her; the veil blown back like a sail before the wind, and bearing in her arms, enthroned as no seat of ivory or gold or jewels could enthrone Him, the Son of her womb, we see her simply as the Mother of God, as the Council of Ephesus declared her in the year 431. It is useless, irrelevant, we may also say profane, to talk of models for such Madonnas. No woman, good or bad, ever served as a model for those masterpieces of supernatural conceptions which Raphael put forth. They soar above individualities as well as nationalities, and the realism which admires, or arrogantly demands either, has never sat at the feet of Mary or learned her characteristics.

It is with a sigh that we turn from the work of our own countrymen and country women, Catholics though they may be, without giving even an attempt to paint or in any way formulate, an idea of the Blessed Virgin whom they are supposed to love and venerate precisely like the Catholics of other times and of other countries. It is in vain to plead what "the picture market demands;" or that "there are, already, so many Madonnas." Every Catholic country has its native Madonnas, so to speak; and Madonnas specially honored and beloved as such. We may count up our churches, our religious orders, our colleges, our population by millions, but we can never claim to be a Catholic country, so long as no artist is inspired to produce, on panel or canvas or wall, from his or her own sanctified heart and sanctified imagination, the image of Mary, Virgin and Mother; and there must be, with all our growing opportunities for art, something lacking in the home influence, not to bring this subject before the young aspirant for artistic honors. We must not look to art academies or institutes for this. They give only the machinery of art; the inspiration to production comes from sources deep hidden in the human heart and soul.

We do remember, not a Madonna, but a veritable Virgin Mary, which might be called an Immaculate

Conception, although we believe it is called "Our Lady of Lourdes." It is in a chapel miles and miles from any railroad or school of art, but the household itself was a school of art, not merely of technical but of religious art; of devout, if you will, of mystical art; and the fruit of this is the ecstatic figure, with a face not only turned heavenward, but illuminated therefrom; the hands, the very flesh etherealized, and the movement upward more of the soul than of the body. One cannot say with truth that this resembles or reminds one of any other picture, although it may have the resemblance which all similar subjects must have; but while the artist had seen many Immaculate Conceptions at home and abroad, this one came from his own imaginings, his own ideal of Mary. To see it in its wonderful beauty over the altar in that chapel of "Our Lady of the Pines," is to recall some visit to a shrine in Catholic Europe and to realize what influences were around all those painters, who, from the last half of the first century, have given Mary her place in art; the same place which the Incarnation has had in our theology from the first century to the nineteenth.

ELIZA ALLEN STARR.

This picture was painted by the late Charles Durward, who died within sight of Our Lady of the Pines shortly after he had reached his thirtieth year.

MARY, IN SONG.

—SELECTED.*

Now, the holy Maiden calls me,
 Bids me sing her wondrous story.
 Son Divine, be thou my helper,
 With Thy gifts my harp enriching,
 So that I may sing Thy Mother,
 Paint her picture full of beauty.
 See, the Maiden womb conceiveth;
 See the Maiden breast is fruitful;
 Wonder far surpassing nature—
 Mother's milk, and Maiden brightness,
 All at once, in one pure body.

—ST. EPHREM THE SYRIAN, IV Century.

O Mary, Mother of all Grace
 And Mercy to our sinful race,
 Drive back the foe; and to thy Son
 Lead thou our souls when life is done.

—VENANTIUS FORTUNATUS: VI Century.

O thou strong in deed and blessing,
 Thou, whom angels come confessing,
 Mary, full of heavenly grace;
 Thee we laud, with supplication
 That thy mighty mediation
 May our many stains erase.

ADAM OF ST. VICTOR: XII Century.

Now, raise thy view
 Unto the visage most resembling Christ:
 For, in her splendour only shalt thou win
 The power to look on Him.

—DANTE, 1265-1321.

All-Potent Queen, whose mercies never cease,
 From whom the world seeks at its darkest hour
 For balm in sorrow, and from sin release.

—CHAUCER, 1340-1400.

And thou, O Virgin, Daughter, Mother, Bride
 Of the same Lord, who gave to you each key
 Of heaven and hell, and everything beside,
 The day thy Gabriel said 'All hail' to thee,
 Since to thy servants pity's ne'er denied,
 With flowing rhymes, a pleasant style and free—
 Be to my verses, then, benignly kind,
 And to the end illuminate my mind.

—LUIGI PULCI, 1431-1487.

Virgin most Pure, who never knewest night,
 Living within the true Sun's deathless day,
 The golden gleam of which, through all thy way,
 Made glad thy beauteous eyes, with joyous light:
 With thee the God-Man dwelt, when angels bright
 Lit up His lowly home with lustrous ray,
 And filled with awe, pleased homage sought to pay,
 Yearning His will to work, be what it might.
 Thou, the Eterne, veiled by our human screen,
 As Lord didst fear; didst cherish as thy Son;
 Didst love as Spouse; as Father didst adore.
 Pray that my troubled stream of life may run
 Back to its happy Source; and, Heaven's great Queen,
 Thy Mother-love show me too, ever more.

—VITTORIA COLONNA, 1490-1547.

O Child of beauty rare—
 O Mother, chaste and fair—
 How happy seem they both, so far beyond compare.

—GOETHE, 1749-1832.

Ave, Maria; 'tis the hour of prayer;
 Ave, Maria; 'tis the hour of love;
 Ave, Maria; may our spirits dare
 Look up to thine and to thy Son's above;
 Ave, Maria; Oh, that face so fair;
 Those down-cast eyes beneath the Almighty Dove—
 What though 'tis but a pictured image strike,
 That painting is no idol—'tis too like.

—BYRON, 1788-1824.

Sweet Benediction in the eternal curse;
 Veiled Glory of this lampless universe.

—SHELLEY, 1792-1822.

So, Mary, they who justly feel the weight
 Of Heaven's offended Majesty, implore
 Thy reconciling aid, with suppliant kneec:
 Of sinful man, O sinless Advocate,
 To thee they turn, nor Him they less adore;
 'Tis still His light they love, less dreadful seen in thee.

—GERALD GRIFFIN.

They served a Maid more beautiful than tongue
 Could tell, or heart conceive. Of human race,
 All heavenly as that Virgin was, she sprung:
 But, for her beauty and celestial grace,
 Being one in whose pure elements no trace
 Had e'er inhered of sin, or mortal stain.
 The highest heaven was now her dwelling place;
 There as a Queen divine she held her reign.
 And there, in endless joy, for ever would remain.

—ROBERT SOUTHY, 1774-1843.

Mother, whose virgin bosom was uncrosth
 With the least shade of thought to sin allied;
 Woman, above all women glorified.
 Our tainted nature's solitary boast;
 Purer than foam on central ocean tost.

—WORDSWORTH, 1770–1850.

Lowliest of Women, and most glorified:
 In thy still beauty, sitting calm and lone,
 A brightness round thee grew; and by thy side,
 Kindling the air, a Form ethereal shone,
 Solemn, yet, breathing gladness. From her throne
 A Queen had risen with more imperial eye;
 A stately Prophetess of victory,
 From her proud lyre had struck a tempest's tone,
 For such high tidings as to thee were brought,
 Chosen of heaven, that hour; but thou, O thou,
 E'en as a flower with gracious rains o'erfraught,
 Thy Virgin-head beneath its crown didst bow,
 And take to thy meek breast the All-holy Word,
 And own thyself the Handmaid of the Lord.

—FELICIA D. HEMANS, 1793–1835.

Ave Maria! thou whose name
 All but adoring love can claim,
 Yet may we reach thy shrine;
 For He, thy Son and Saviour, vows
 To crown all lowly, lofty brows
 With love and joy like thine.

—JOHN KEBLE, 1792–1866.

This is indeed the Blessed Mary's land,
 Virgin and Mother of our dear Redeemer.
 All hearts are touched and softened at her name;
 Alike the bandit, with the bloody hand,
 The priest, the prince, the scholar and the peasant,
 The man of deeds, the visionary dreamer,
 Pay homage to her as one ever present
 And even as children, who have much offended
 A too indulgent father, in great shame,
 Penitent, and yet, not daring unattended
 To go into his presence, at the gate
 Speak with their sister, and confiding wait
 Till she goes in before and intercedes;
 So, men, repenting of their evil deeds,
 And yet, not venturing rashly to draw near
 With their requests an angry father's ear,
 Offer to her their prayers and their confession,
 And she for them in heaven makes intercession.
 And, if our faith had given us nothing more
 Than this Example of all Womanhood,
 So mild, so merciful, so strong, so good,
 So patient, peaceful, loyal, loving, pure—
 This were enough to prove it higher and truer
 Than all the creeds the world had known before.

—LONGFELLOW, 1807–1882.

At morn, at noon, at twilight dim,
 Maria, thou hast heard my hymn;
 In joy and woe, in good and ill,
 Mother of God, be with me still.

—EDGAR ALLAN POE, 1811-1849.

And here, the priceless Pearl, the Mother-Maid,
 Lily and Rose of earth, of heaven the Gem,
 Goddess and Queen of gods and mortals made.
 And these beside, as round the central stem
 Clusters the petalled flower, in scent and hue
 Flawless, complete, a self-crowned diadem;
 So, those great spirits divine, faithful and true,
 In many fanes enshrined, by many a tongue
 Invoked, who, to blind men the labyrinth clue,
 That heavenward leads, 'mid scorn and worst of wrong,
 Have freely placed in hand, together blent,
 Here tuned of renovate love the nuptial song.
 As in a dream I heard and saw.

—W. G. PALGRAVE, 1826-1888.

Blest Mother of my Lord, I fly to thee,
 Who ever hast a mother's love for me,
 Who prayest ceaselessly to God for me.

* * * * *

No love of Jesus is flamed-winged like thine,
 For all His overflowing heart is thine;
 My Mother Mary, make thy Jesus mine.

* * * * *

Thou chosen Daughter of the Living One;
 Thou sun-clothed Mother of the Living One;
 Thou Bride, star-crownèd, of the Living One;

* * * * *

Thou helpest souls on earth who know not thee,
 The souls who trust with childlike love to thee,
 The souls who look in pain and grief to thee.

* * * * *

My Mother thou art dearest to the King,
 Touching the golden sceptre of the King,
 Thy sinless hands uplifting to the King.

My Mother, evermore the Queen of Heaven,
 The risen stars are round thy throne in heaven;
 Thy Son, the Saint's Desire, is King of Heaven.

* * * * *

Bring me to Him who sought on earth for me,
 Who lived, divinely sorrowful, for me—
 Thy Jesus, Son of God, who died for me.

—H. A. RAWES, 1826-1885.

Mother of the Fair Delight,
 Thou Handmaid perfect in God's sight,
 Now sitting fourth beside the Three,
 Thyself a Woman-trinity—
 Being a Daughter born to God,
 Mother of Christ from stall to rood,
 And Wife unto the Holy Ghost—
 Oh, when our need is uttermost,
 Think that to such as death may strike
 Thou once wert Sister sister-like:
 Thou Headstone of humanity,
 Groundstone of the great mystery,
 Fashioned like us, yet more than we.

—DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI, 1828-1882.

And yet, to some the name of Mary bears
 No special meaning, and no gracious power;
 In that dear word they seek for hidden snares,
 As wasps find poison in the sweetest flower.

But, faithful hearts can see, o'er doubts and fears,
 The Virgin-link that binds the Lord to earth:
 Which, to the upturned trusting face, appears
 Greater than angel, though of human birth.

—JOHN BOYLE O'REILLY, 1844-1890.

Not all thy purity, although
 The whitest moon that ever lit
 The peaks of Lebanonian snow
 Shone dusk and dim compared with it—

Not that great love of thine, whose beams
 Transcended, in their virtuous heat,
 Those suns which melt the ice-bound streams,
 And make earth's pulses newly beat—

It was not these that from the sky
 Drew down to thee the Eternal Word:
 He looked on thy humility;
 He knew thee, 'Handmaid of thy Lord.'

—AUBREY DEVERE, 1889.

If, as time wanes, my spirit sinks oppressed,
 Crushed under cares that know not change, nor measure,
 Thou soothe my sorrows on thy mother-breast:
 And oh, when near my time for homeward passing,
 And my frail vessel almost sights the land,
 And my tired eyes their last of earth are glassing,
 Thou gently close them with thy holy hand:
 Then, as I tread the vale with staff and rod,
 Commend my spirit to the hands of God.

—POPE LEO XIII, 1891.

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